



# KNOW Before You Go!

## HYPOTHERMIA

When exposed to cold temperatures, your body begins to lose heat faster than it can be produced. Prolonged exposure to cold will eventually use up your body's stored energy. The result is hypothermia, or abnormally low body temperature. Body temperature that is too low affects the brain, making the victim unable to think clearly or move well. This makes hypothermia particularly dangerous since a person may not know it is happening and won't be able to do anything about it. Hypothermia is most likely at very cold temperatures, but it can occur even at cool temperatures (above 40°F) if a person becomes chilled from rain, sweat, or submersion in cold water. Victims of hypothermia are often (1) elderly people with inadequate food, clothing, or heating; (2) babies sleeping in cold bedrooms; (3) people who remain outdoors for long periods—the homeless, hikers, hunters, etc.; and (4) people who drink alcohol or use illicit drugs.



## Checklist

**If you notice any of these signs, take the person's temperature. If it is below 95°, the situation is an emergency—get medical attention immediately. If medical care is not available, begin warming the person, as follows:**

- ☐ Get the victim into a warm room or shelter.
- ☐ If the victim has on any wet clothing, remove it.
- ☐ Warm the center of the body first—chest, neck, head, and groin—using an electric blanket, if available. Or use skin-to-skin contact under loose, dry layers of blankets, clothing, towels, or sheets.
- ☐ Warm beverages can help increase the body temperature, but do not give alcoholic beverages. Do not try to give beverages to an unconscious person.
- ☐ After body temperature has increased, keep the person dry and wrapped in a warm blanket, including the head and neck.
- ☐ Get medical attention as soon as possible.

**Note:** A person with severe hypothermia may be unconscious and may not seem to have a pulse or to be breathing. CPR should be administered in that case. CPR should continue while the victim is being warmed, until the victim responds or medical aid becomes available. In some cases, hypothermia victims who appear to be dead can be successfully resuscitated.

